



Fly fishing Mohaka River Photo: Shellie Evans, <http://tikitouringnz.blogspot.co.nz/>

Improving Fish and Game: Strengthening and modernising the organisation

The Minister for Hunting and Fishing is proposing changes to strengthen and modernise Fish and Game. This will help the organisation to manage hunting and fishing resources more effectively and efficiently and improve value for money for licence holders.

What is Fish and Game?

Fish and Game was established in 1990 under the Conservation Act 1987, evolving from acclimatisation societies dating back to the 1860s. Fish and Game manages freshwater sports fishing (including trout, salmon, perch, and tench) and game bird hunting (including ducks, black swan, pheasants, and quail) in New Zealand.*



- 12 independent regional Fish and Game Councils of up to 12 members elected by licence holders.
- A national coordinating body, the New Zealand Fish and Game Council, formed of one nominated councillor from each Fish and Game Council.

158,233 licences sold for the 2023/2024 season

22.6% game
bird hunting
licences



77.4%
fishing
licences



A \$12 million annual budget generated
primarily from sales of sports fishing and
game bird hunting licences

*The exceptions to this are the Taupō Trout Fishery, where the Department of Conservation (DOC) carries out those functions for sports fish, and the Chatham Islands, where DOC manages the recreational hunting of birds.



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government



Why are changes needed?

Several reviews and audits of Fish and Game have highlighted issues that undermine performance and credibility:

- A lack of cohesion between councils, which can hinder growth of best practice and ability to manage national hunting and fishing resources
- Duplicated effort and administrative processes across the organisation, meaning inefficient use of licence holder funds
- Variable governance performance and legislation that is out of step with modern practice, impacting good decision making
- An electoral system which lacks a fair representation of membership
- Non-hunting and non-fishing interests may not always be accounted for
- Advocacy has not always been in the best interests of licence holders.

Mallard ducks swimming, at dusk, Whangamarino Wetland.

What will be the key changes?

Clarify roles and responsibilities between regional Fish and Game Councils and the New Zealand Fish and Game Council to improve effectiveness and efficiency. This should deliver better hunting and fishing outcomes and improve value for money for licence holders:

- Advocacy functions will be revised so that the New Zealand Fish and Game Council will set direction that is binding on regional Fish and Game Councils regarding advocacy. Regional Fish and Game Councils will only be able to take court action in relation to advocacy if explicitly approved by the New Zealand Fish and Game Council or the Minister.
- Focus regional Fish and Game Council expertise on decisions that support hunting and fishing opportunities.
- The New Zealand Fish and Game Council will take responsibility for some administrative tasks to reduce the burden on regional Fish and Game Councils.
- The New Zealand Fish and Game Council will lead improved performance and coherence across the organisation to meet licence holders' expectations and improve their experience.
- Reduce the administrative burden by making the New Zealand Fish and Game Council responsible for collecting and distributing licence fees towards hunting and fishing activity and needs throughout the country.

Strengthen Fish and Game's 'user pays, user says' foundations to improve decision-making efficiency, and professionalism:

- The maximum number of councillors on each Fish and Game Council will be reduced.
- More licence holders will be eligible to vote and stand in Fish and Game elections, encouraging a wider range of views in decision-making.
- Fish and Game Councils will better consider the interests of non-hunters and non-fishers in decision-making.

More generally modernise the organisation, increasing transparency, strengthening checks and balances and reporting to improve Fish and Game's accountability:

- The Minister for Hunting and Fishing will be able to intervene in exceptional circumstances (for example, ability to remove councillors and appoint up to two additional regional Fish and Game councillors).
- Fish and Game councillors will need to comply with professional standards expected of modern entities.
- Better and more consistent reporting.
- Modernised election and meeting procedures.

What does the reform mean for licence holders?

What <u>you</u> will gain from this reform:	What is <u>not</u> changing as a result of this reform:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Better value for money: You will get better hunting and fishing experiences and opportunities and/or efficiency savings passed back to you.○ Increased eligibility: You will have greater eligibility to both vote and stand for Fish and Game elections (e.g., partners of family licence holders will now be able to vote and stand), meaning you will be better represented in decision-making.○ More responsive to your interests: Fish and Game Councils can focus more on improving hunting and fishing opportunities in your region for your benefit.○ Better regulator: By becoming more efficient and cohesive, Fish and Game can focus on its core responsibilities, grow best practice and better serve your interests.○ Modernised and more professional organisation: Fish and Game will need to comply with the professional standards expected of modern entities, strengthening the organisation's credibility and improving decision making to benefit licence holders.○ Improved transparency: Fish and Game will be more transparent around objectives and performance. You will be able to more easily know how your licence holder dollars are spent and what has been achieved for your benefit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How and when you can buy your licence: The process remains the same. You will still buy your licence online, by phone, at Fish and Game offices, or through regional licence agents. What is changing is how the licence fee will be collected and distributed across Fish and Game.○ Your licence fees: These are proposed by Fish and Game and approved or declined by the responsible Minister. The changes won't affect this process but should improve value for money.○ Same overall Fish and Game structure: There will still be one coordinating New Zealand Fish and Game Council, and up to 12 regional Fish and Game Councils, but they will be encouraged to work more cohesively.○ Local decision-making: Your regional Fish and Game Council will maintain decision-making and be better focussed on local matters. This means that your local Fish and Game Council will still:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set size and bag limits and conditions for fish and game seasons.• Advocate your interests as needed, and in line the organisation's advocacy strategy.• Monitor sports fish and game bird populations, your satisfaction, and the conditions and trends of habitats.• Ensure compliance with sports fishing and game bird hunting rules.

What are the next steps?

- DOC will work with Fish and Game over the coming months to ensure a smooth transition period to the proposed changes.
- The changes are expected to be introduced to Parliament by the end of the year.
- Interested parties will have a chance to share views on the changes during the select committee stage, anticipated to be towards the end of the year.